

Remarks of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Miracle Mile Democratic Club's Lifetime Achievement Award
Recorded for August 24, 2014

I would like to thank all of my friends at the Miracle Mile Democratic Club for awarding me the club's very first Lifetime Achievement Award.

It is a great honor for me to receive this recognition.

Thank you to Ted Lieu for introducing me and to Miracle Mile Democratic Club Officers Illissa Gold, Michael Kapp, Casey Robinson, and Steve Bott.

And, congratulations to tonight's other honorees -- Holly Mitchell, Ron Galperin, the Los Angeles County Democratic Party, and Steve Bott.

As you know, I am retiring from Congress at the end of this year after 40 years.

As I reflect on my career, I am filled with gratitude.

I am grateful to you for entrusting me to represent you and for giving me an opportunity to be a leader on national and international issues.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you to fight for issues we care about: health care, environmental protection, consumer protection, women's and LGBT rights, civil and constitutional freedoms, and strengthening the ties between the United States and our ally, Israel.

I first ran for public office because I believe government can be a force for good in people's lives. I have held this view throughout my career in Congress and I will leave office with this conviction firmly intact.

We know that special interests have advocates in Washington. It's the poor, the sick, and the powerless who need a champion in Congress. And that's what I have strived to be.

I am often asked which law I authored has been most satisfying to me personally. I can't pick just one. They are all important to me because they improve public health and the environment in some way.

The Waxman-Hatch Generic Drug Act created the generic drug industry and has saved families more than \$1 trillion in the last decade alone.

The Orphan Drug Act gave drug companies incentives to develop treatments for rare diseases that were previously ignored. In a world where so many people faced hopeless odds against getting medical treatment they needed, the Act brought genuine hope to more than 25 million Americans living with rare diseases.

The Ryan White CARE Act provides essential medical care and services to Americans living with HIV/AIDS.

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act restricted the marketing of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco to children and gave the Food and Drug Administration jurisdiction over tobacco products.

The Nutrition Labeling Act mandated the popular nutrition labels that consumers now take for granted and rely upon to compare packaged foods.

The Clean Air Act Amendments established new programs to reduce urban smog, hazardous air pollution, acid rain, and prevent the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer.

The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments strengthened the standards for drinking water and improved drinking water infrastructure.

The Food Quality Protection Act established a strong health-based standard for pesticide residues in food.

The Food Safety Modernization Act set science-based standards for the safe production and harvest of raw agricultural commodities and required preventative controls for companies that process or package foods.

In the 1980s, I led the fight to expand Medicaid to ensure health coverage to millions of low-income children, pregnant women, and seniors.

In the 1990s, I worked with Senator Ted Kennedy to extend health coverage to the children of working families through the Children's Health Insurance Program.

As Chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, I led the investigations that identified billions of abuses of taxpayer dollars, especially in Iraq, and I held hearings to reveal the causes of the mortgage meltdown and Wall Street crash.

In 2010, when I was chair of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, one of my lifelong dreams was finally achieved: Congress enacted the Affordable Care Act, which guarantees Americans access to quality affordable health coverage.

I have led the fight in Congress for limits on carbon pollution, which is causing global climate change.

As I leave Congress, it pains me to know that we have not yet finished our work to address the dangerous impacts of climate change.

It also pains me to know that peace in the Middle East is as elusive today as it was when I arrived to Congress in 1975.

Many people ask me if I'm leaving Congress because it's no longer possible to work across the aisle to get things done. There is no question it is harder to pass legislation in Congress today. But enacting laws that make America a better nation has always been hard. It will be hard in the future, but it will always be worth the fight.

We also know that we can never take the gains we've earned for granted. Nothing is ever fully secure.

That is why it is so important that you continue to work to promote the causes we believe in and that you make sure Ted Lieu gets elected to the 33rd Congressional District so he can carry on our fight.

While I will no longer have the privilege of serving as your Congressman, I look forward to working with you, as a friend, on the issues we care about.

Thank you again for the great honor you have bestowed on me, and for your support and friendship, which I will always treasure.